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Page	CONTENTS
2	A First Look at Huns
9	Cottontails on the Table
10	Water Fowl and Water Safety
13	Warden's Diary
14	Yellow River Marker Honors Mans Ellerhoff
15	Classroom Corner



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A FIRST LOOK AT HUNS

By Roger Sparks—

The odds looked pretty bad. We knew from the distribution map that we were in the area rated "best" for partridge, but we were also aware that Iowa Huns are a "bonus" bird. Most of the 15,000 birds annually bagged are taken by pheasant hunters.

"Let's try to turn things around," Rick had suggested, "sort of concentrate on Huns and take ringnecks on the side."

Although it sounded simple enough, I had decided to go, hoping only for some late season



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pheasant shooting. On a two-day venture, successful partridge hunting had seemed pretty remote. Iowa Huns are just plain tough to hunt. The population is fair in the best area, but that country is the flat, wide open agricultural land of northern Iowa where coveys typically flush wild and fly far. Pursuit usually results in a duplication of the first flush — a frustrating, long-range bird watching affair.

Rick had a hunch though, that in deep powder snow, the birds may "dig in" and tend to hold better. I was still pessimistic when the weatherman predicted a snowy weekend and we packed our gear and Rick's fine black Lab, Polly, into his van.

Things were right on schedule. A loose, heavy snow was blanketing the state as we picked up John, Rick's long-time pheasant and quail hunting companion, and departed on the weather-slowed jaunt up north.

Though they had been unsuccessful, Rick and John had given Huns a go on an earlier trip. They had spotted two coveys, received permission to hunt from the appropriate landowners, but were unable to get close. That failure hadn't dampened their enthusiasm one bit; in fact, they were now glorifying the partridge and were more than ever looking forward to bagging their first Iowa Hun. I just sat there, listening to their overly-optimistic chatter and musing over the pedestal on which they had placed the little bird. I wasn't putting Huns on my trophy list, but a bit of their enthusiasm had worn off as we pulled off the highway and began glassing the snow covered fields.

The Hun is a bird of open country and his range now stretches from the prairie provinces down into northwestern and north central Iowa. Hungarian partridge are exotics and were first introduced into Iowa in the early 1900s. Although not as plentiful as the pheasant, the Hun population remains strong and stable. Iowa Conservation Com-

mission biologists are successfully broadening the range of the Hun in Iowa by a live-trapping and transplanting program.

After a long afternoon I was beginning to understand why my partners viewed Iowa's partridge as such a challenging quarry. We had seen only one covey and they had flushed wild from a fence row. They flew three hundred yards to a livestock-trampled cornfield, flushed wild again and finally disappeared into the gray horizon. After sighting, twice asking permission for access and calculating approaches, we had failed to get within a hundred yards of the birds. What's more, although we had occasionally spotted pheasants that afternoon, we had decided to pass them up and keep looking for Huns. Optimism waning with the dim afternoon light, Rick and John agreed to take those ring-necks on Sunday.

During the cold night the weather had settled and in the morning the sun stretched out across the sparkling fields. Pheasants would be bunched around fence row cover, windbreaks and drainage ditches, so we decided to head back to some of those areas we'd observed the day before.

And pheasants we found. We took turns pushing and blocking the ditches and windbreaks. The big hardy birds have made good use of these areas and although the population density has shifted southward with the habitat, good numbers of ringnecks are still available late in the season in northern sections.

Blockers often get the most action. After trudging across a field of foot-deep snow to a predetermined point, perhaps a half mile from the other hunters, the wait begins. At first, nothing. Then as the drivers narrow the gap, most of the crafty birds begin flushing out of range. Some fly straight down the ditch directly at the blocker. Always careful of the direction he shoots, the blocker usually comes out with a bird or two and the ex-

citing experience of watching pheasants roar down the chute right at him.

After hunting two such ditches and working out a productive windbreak, we had four pheasants in our gamebags. Not a bad late season morning and by noon, no one was complaining about the lack of Huns.

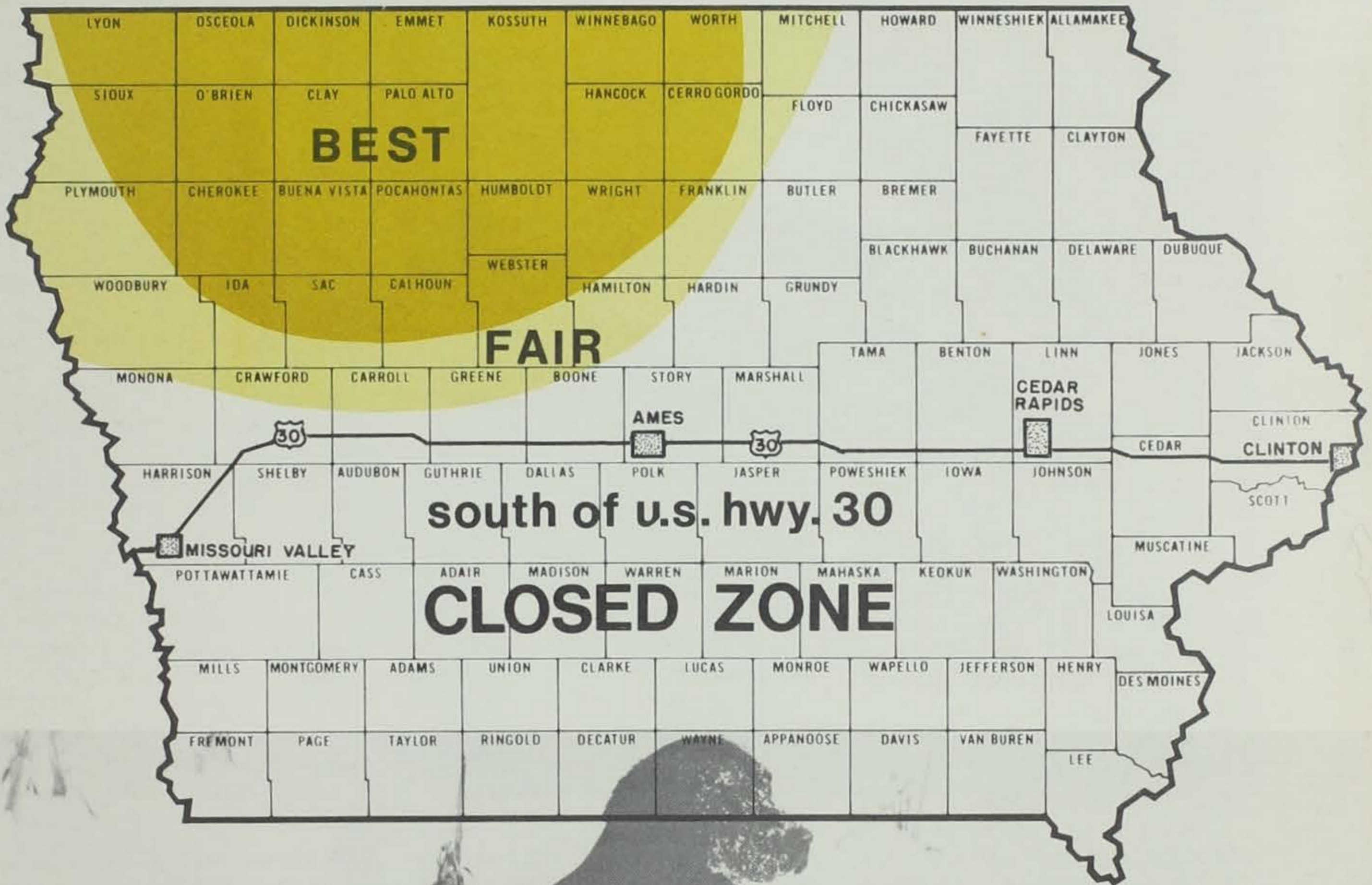
After lunch we were thinking only of pheasants. But, as is often the case with hunting, things begin happening when least expected and on this day, things occurred in storybook fashion.

We had spotted a flock of twenty or more pheasants, a good percentage of which were cocks, scratching along a thick windbreak that protected a set of abandoned farm buildings. After locating the owner a few miles down the road we parked the van and planned our strategy.

The entire area covered perhaps two acres or more and was mostly grown up with horseweeds. The pine windbreak was undermined with dense cover and stretched to a point beyond the buildings. The windbreak was about twenty yards wide and we hoped most of the birds would push to the end of it before flushing. John began a long walk, well out around the area, to block at that far point of the break.

Rick and Polly began pushing the right side while I got right into the middle of the weeds—hopelessly trying to cover everything on the left. The deserted place was matted with tracks and we moved slowly and quietly so as not to spook the birds too soon.

Suddenly there were birds scurrying ahead. Seconds later the entire area exploded with the beating of powerful wings. Pheasants busted out everywhere, roosters cackling and knocking snow from the pine branches in every direction. From down ahead John's double echoed through the pines and Rick countered on the right. Two ring-necks outfoxed me by lifting off behind a building. A third had





held tight and took off well out of range behind me. All the other birds on my side were hens and I didn't fire a shot. When silence returned and the "snowstorm" settled I began moving ahead feeling a little disappointed.

As we approached the end, a small clearing in the tangle allowed me to see through to Rick who was just taking a rooster from Polly's mouth. He yelled down to John, "How'd you do?"

At the sound of his voice the windbreak erupted again. I couldn't see birds but I strained in the direction of the noise. Something seemed different, faster wingbeats . . . more like quail . . . more like . . .

"Huns!" Rick shouted, "Huns!"

And there they were. One blur of feathers broke in my direction, up and over a pine tree. I had only a second. I got on him as best I could and fired. Miraculously, the bird fell.

Down at the end John was whooping it up like a schoolboy and I knew mine wasn't the only

Hun on the ground. His exuberance hadn't deterred his good hunting sense and he marked the covey down in the middle of a large, barren cornfield. We stopped only for a moment to admire our two handsome birds.

Far from ornate or gaudy, the Hun's coloration is surprisingly delicate. The brownish-gray back blends beautifully into the buff breast which is highlighted by the characteristic dark brown spot. Partridge weigh a little under a pound — about twice the size of a bobwhite. A good looking bird indeed.

"Maybe we were lucky in the windbreak," John interrupted, "but now we'll see whether or not this deep snow will make 'em hold in the open."

Our excitement rose as we approached the place where John was certain the birds had landed. Were they holding tight or had John been wrong about the location? We passed the area without a rise. Another twenty yards and still no Huns. We turned around

and spread out a bit. Again I heard the unique whirring sound before I saw the birds. They flushed en masse to the left and we brought down two more partridge. At least today, Rick's deep snow theory had proven correct.

The afternoon slipped away but not before we managed to find and bust another covey of Huns and knock down three more ringnecks. Our efforts on that memorable December day produced nine cock pheasants and seven Hungarian partridge.

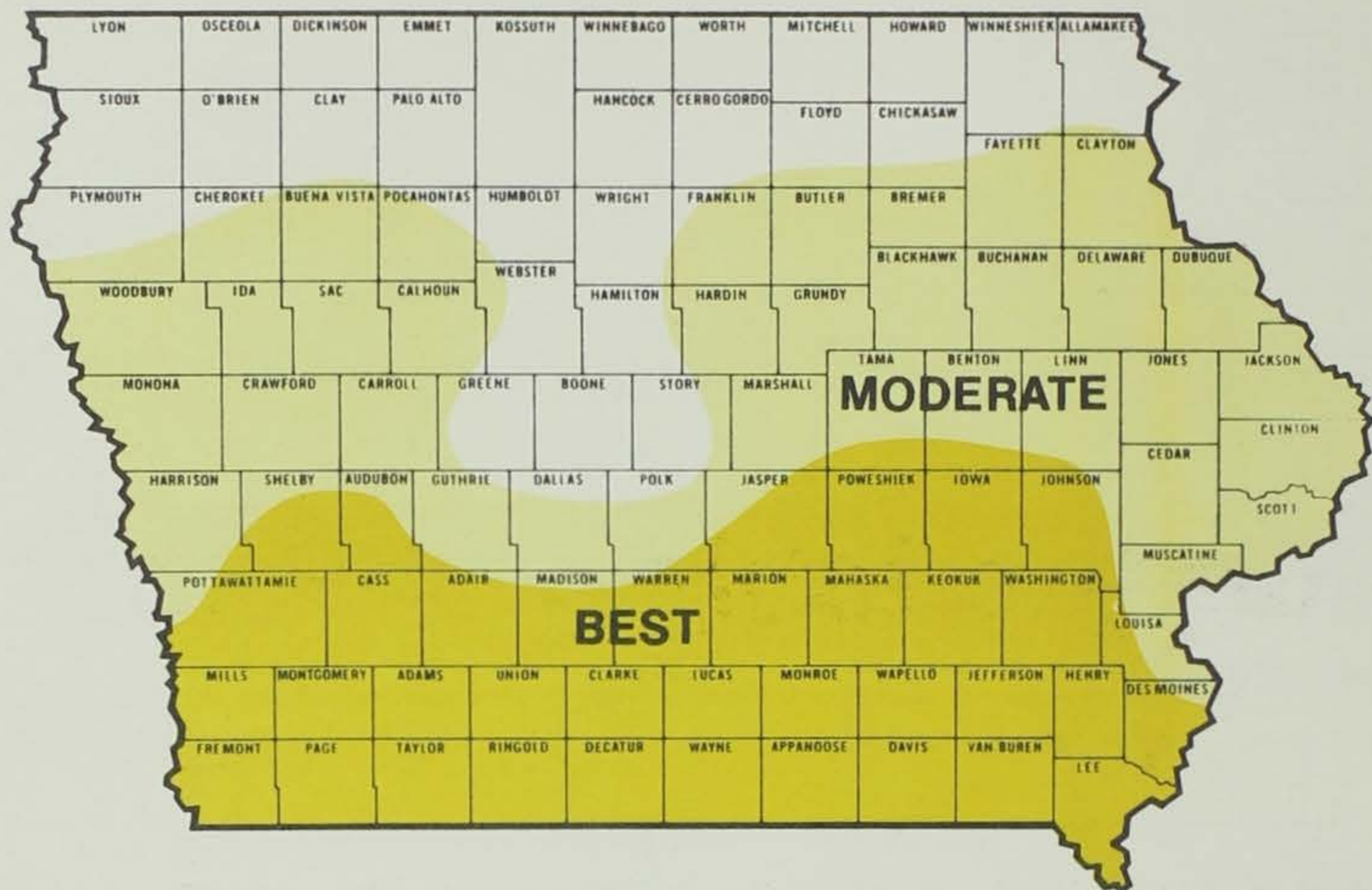
An unusual day? No doubt. But I know two southern Iowa bird hunters who'll be heading north at the first sign of a heavy snow — up to that country where quail don't exist and the pheasant hunting is rated just "fair." On the way they'll talk about what a great little game bird the Hun is and they'll rehash a certain day last December. And if there's room in the van, maybe they'll invite a friend — just to listen, and smile, and scratch Polly's ears. ☆



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cottontail

on the table

By Charles C. Schwartz
Wildlife Biologist

EDITOR'S NOTE: The "tried and true" recipes included in this article were taken from Remington's **WILD GAME COOKBOOK** (\$2.95, Box 731, Bridgeport, Conn. 06601).

The Iowa cottontail rabbit season looks good again this year. Results from the Iowa Conservation Commission's annual rabbit survey indicate that our rabbit populations are still high. There was a slight decrease in rabbit numbers from 1972, but not enough to make rabbit hunting poor.

The rabbit population, of course, is related to good cover and lots of it. As the map shows, best rabbit numbers occur in the southern third of the state and this is not by chance. Southern Iowa with its rolling topography and diversified farming provides excellent rabbit habitat. Unlike the intensively farmed areas of central and northern Iowa, the southern part of the state still has many areas of good brush cover. Best areas in which to look for Mr. Cottontail are brushy draws around grain fields. Idle fields or weedy pastures also have fair rabbit numbers. Be sure to check those brush piles, too—cottontails often use them for protection.

Rabbit hunting is a sport that can test the skill of the best shotgun hunter and Br'er Rabbit is sure to match his wits against

those sporty nimrods who use a .22 rifle or pistol. A cottontail is apt to try all the tricks Mother Nature gave him plus speed for which he is famous. He has a deceptive change of pace which has caused many a hunter to "shoot where I thought he was."

Besides being the most popular game animal in North America and one of the most abundant, rabbits are first class food for the dinner table. With increased meat costs these days, cottontails on the table can provide tasty eating besides reducing your meat bill.

This year Iowa has a 181 day season which opened September 1 and runs through February 28, 1974. Daily bag limit is 10 with no possession limit. Shooting hours are from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Once you've bagged your bunnies, the best procedure is to field dress them at once. Do this by cutting the animal open from the vent to the ribs on his belly side, then sling the entrails out on the ground. Bury the entrails or bag them for later disposal. Dogs can get tapeworms if they eat these remains, so keep them well out of reach of your beagle. After your hunt is completed you

can skin your game in the field or take it home.

Many people prefer to soak their cleaned rabbit in salt water before cooking. Others use vinegar or wine. Soaking for a short period before cooking does help remove excess blood from the meat, but soaking is a matter of personal taste.

So now you've got the meat—how do you cook it? I have included several favorite rabbit recipes which were taken from wild game cook books. Pick one that fits your taste and have at it.

STEWED RABBIT

- 2 rabbits
- salt, pepper
- 2 medium onions, fine-chopped
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1-inch cube ham, fine-chopped
- 1 cup water
- 1 small can mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons sherry

Clean rabbit, cut at joints in serving pieces. Rub each piece with salt and pepper. Brown rabbit and onion in vegetable oil, then add chopped ham, water, mushrooms and wine. Stir well, season again to taste. Simmer 1 hour. Serve hot. Serves 8.

(Continued on Page 14)

waterfowl and water

By James Horan
Boating Safety Coordinator

One of the best outdoor sports (some people don't even recognize another) is being pursued by Iowans right now. If you're one of those people who exists simply for this season, then you've already guessed that we're talking about—duck hunting.

And it's not just shot versus duck, either. Planning where to go, buying and repairing equipment, setting up your blind, the actual hunt—after 10 months of dreaming about it—that's what duck hunting can be.

The preparation for the actual hunt is the most important time. Boats, motors, decoys, clothing, an extra oar, lifejackets—all are checked carefully to prevent problems later. The weather, especially at this time of year, can be a big factor in personal safety.

Where you are going to hunt, the body of water you'll be on or near will have the greatest significance in your preparation for hunting. If you hunt the marshes of a natural lake, the upper reaches of a federal reservoir, or the backwaters of one of our major rivers you have certain environmental factors to contend with and your equipment should reflect these considerations.

For example, the Missouri or Mississippi River duck hunter needs to allow for current, weight of decoys, sand bars, moving ice, barges, etc.

The current is the vitality of a river. It creates and destroys with relentless effort. Decoys must be weighted more heavily to offset the effects of current. And because river hunters generally use 50-100 decoys this additional weight could be an important factor in overloading

your boat. Because of the current, sand bars have a habit of disappearing and reappearing somewhere else. When you're out hunting and see your decoy start to drift, don't chase it on foot—get your boat. It may have drifted into very deep water. It's quite easy to go from ankle deep water to over your head in one step. Walking along rock dikes requires plain old common sense. If you must do it, check for icy conditions and be very careful of loose rocks.

Moving ice and slush can be dealt with sometimes if you're careful. If you are caught on the river and the motor fails, then use the extra oar to move your boat into the current. By staying low in your boat you're unlikely to tip it over and the current will move you toward one shore or another. The same principle holds if you fall in the river. Get into the current and slowly move with its help toward shore again. This is assuming, of course, that you are wearing a life jacket. Without it, your chances of survival decrease tremendously. This brings another point to mind. Wearing a hunting vest full of shells while on the river serves little purpose other than to help drown you if you fall in. With all the other things to contend with, you don't need to make a mistake like that.

River banks in general are dangerous at this time of year. It's awfully easy to slide down (and sometimes impossible to get back up) because of snow or ice making the bank too slippery. In this case wearing a personal flotation device won't keep you from falling into the river, but it sure will help keep you from drowning while you're figuring out how to get out. Another thing—when you pull your boat up to

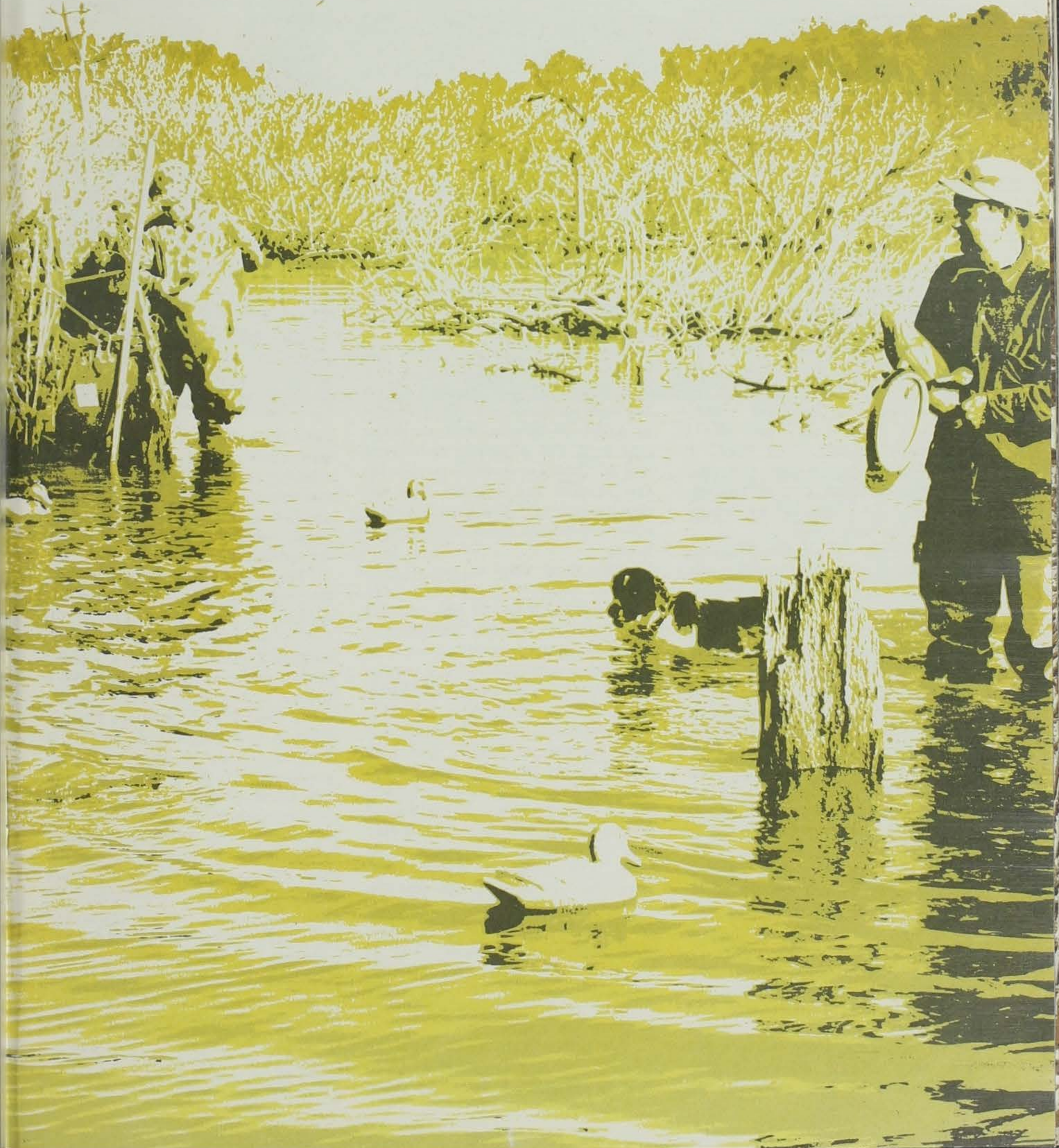
a bank be sure to tie it to a stable object. Fluctuations in the level of the river at this time of year could leave you stranded.

Downstream objects such as barges or a wingdam can cause trouble, too. Maneuverability of your boat decreases in proportion to the equipment you have on it. Always approach your destination from downstream; you have much better control of your speed and are more likely to see objects just beneath the surface.

The marshes of the natural lakes are hunted a little differently. Here, wind and mud need to be considered. If the wind is "up," there is no point in even going out. Much of the movement of boats on the lakes is done by poling about. Every once in a while somebody leans on a pole a bit too hard and the boat slides right out from under him and that's not the worst of it. A marsh tends to be comprised of mud and silt with a little water over it. Having to wade through it can be the hardest task your body has ever encountered. That mud sort of grabs hold and doesn't turn loose very easily. Forced activity of this nature can give even a young man a heart attack.

Duck hunting on the federal reservoirs is similar to hunting on the natural lakes. Silt-mud and wind are problems. Something else to consider, though, is the time it takes to travel across these large bodies of water. The smallest federal reservoir in Iowa is just under 5,000 acres and they go on up from there. The distance across might just as well be 100 miles when the wind starts to blow. Even if your boat is not overloaded and sitting low in the water, two four-foot waves could swamp you easily. If a sudden change in the weather is pre-

er SAFETY



dicted, don't go out in the water. Stay on shore, stay dry and warm, and stay alive!

Some aspects of duck hunting are common problems regardless of the body of water or type of area involved. A wind-chill chart and a hypothermia chart are presented here to help you plan ahead for your personal safety. (See attachments included.)

The most popular kind of boat to use (and rightly so) is the jon (joe) boat. The jon boat is traditionally the work boat for persons making their livelihood on Iowa's rivers and lakes. It has a wide flat bottom, low sides, and is quite stable. Its one problem is that with the amount of equipment often required for duck hunting, the boat can easily become overloaded. The size of the boat is determined by the number of persons you'll have with you, the amount of equipment you'll want, the area you'll be using, and the weather conditions. If your duck boat has a passenger capacity of five, it wasn't designed to hold five persons plus a blind and all the decoys and dogs and other equipment you may require.

If you go out on the Missouri or Mississippi Rivers you'll probably want a 16 foot boat, whereas if you stay on the backwaters or use the inland streams and lakes and don't use much equipment, something less than 16 feet may be enough for you. Wind, of course, can ruin all your plans, so be sure to prepare for it before going out.

One method of reducing your chances of overloading is to remain within the passenger capacity limits. These limits are based on 150 pounds per person, which is what the average person weighs. Add up the weight of all the equipment you want and subtract the equivalent weight in number of passengers.

If you've already got a boat, changing it may not be practical, so be sure to take its size and limitations into consideration when choosing your duck hunting area. Next, whatever size you now think you need, get the

next size larger. The slight addition in weight is greatly offset by the great increase in stability. Something else to think about is that it is against the law to operate an overloaded boat. Sometimes it's hard not to overload, what with guns, decoys, dogs, people, etc., but taking the chance just isn't worth it.

Ducks will usually land on the leeward side of land and then come into the wind. In one sense, this works well for the duck hunter because the wind is at his back, but a downed duck can quickly drift away. Don't wade out after it; take your boat. You could get a lot farther out in that mud and silt than you expected.

This time of the year, icy conditions can develop overnight. Actually, during some periods your boat can ice up while you're riding in it. To help prevent this situation, keep your boat as dry as possible. Turn it over at night. Be sure to keep a bailing device at hand. A simple way to make one is to cut a plastic antifreeze jug so that the handle is still intact. Leave the cap on and cut the bottom off. It makes a really effective water scoop for flat surfaces.

The final step in your preparation before taking your boat out into the water is the location of your life saving devices. A Coast Guard approved cushion or ring buoy is required as a throwable device on all motorized boats 16' and over. This is in addition to a personal flotation device for each person on board. The rule makes a lot of sense for everybody. It's a good idea to attach 50' of rope to the cushion and if anyone does fall into the water you can throw the cushion to him. The average water temperature throughout the state is already down to 60°. So now is the time more than ever to make sure everyone in your boat is wearing a PFD. At least have all personal flotation devices right next to each passenger so he can reach them easily.

All boats with motor over 10 horsepower are required to have fire extinguishers. It might seem



ridiculous for outboards, but you can have gas fumes from any number of places. The gas tank, gas or motor itself could develop small invisible leaks which could ignite immediately if a cigarette were close by.

Make sure your lights are operating properly. You are required to have them so that if you're out before sunrise or after sundown (and what duck hunter isn't!) other boaters can avoid a collision.

A final way to prepare for the hunt is to try to figure out what you would do in any dangerous situation. Cover everything you can think of from having to stay out overnight to drowning possibilities, then prepare yourself accordingly. A mental plan of action can save you or your duck hunting partner from disaster. ☆

Hypothermia Chart

Water Temp. (°F)	Exhaustion or Unconsciousness	Expected Time of Survival
32.5	Under 15 Min.	Under 15-45 Min.
32.5-40.0	15-30 Min.	30-90 Min.
40-50	30-60 Min.	1-3 Hr.
50-60	1-2 Hr.	1-6 Hr.
60-70	2-7 Hr.	2-40 Hr.
70-80	3-12 Hr.	3-Indef.
Over 80	Indef.	Indef.



Warden's diary

By Rex Emerson
Law Enforcement Supervisor

Checked duck hunters on the marsh today. Sure makes a long day!

The duck hunter is on the marsh before daylight; so am I. It's hard to set the duck season to suit all the hunters. The fall weather is hard to predict along in August when the seasons are set. It seems to the duck hunter that the season is always too late for the early ducks, and closes too soon for the late ducks. The southern Iowa hunter wants the season to open later, and the northern hunter wants it earlier; you can't win.

This morning I was standing in the heavy vegetation of the marsh trying to look like a duck hunter waiting for the legal

shooting hour. You could hear the slushing sound of other hunters wading in ankle deep water, and an occasional marsh bird scolding after being disturbed. The splash of decoys also broke the silence as they were being thrown out into some open water. Twelve minutes before shooting time the silence was really broken as someone at the other end of the marsh opened up with three shots from a shot gun. I wanted to take off and run in that direction, but experience told me to stay put. Probably a hundred hunters on the marsh this morning, it would be difficult to find who fired those shots. Three more minutes of silence and then I saw two wood ducks

winging their way up the middle of the marsh toward me. Still not shooting time. I had checked by watch with the car radio just before I had gotten to the area. I knew the temptation was going to be great and sure enough it was more than two hunters could stand, and they dropped them both. They were surprised to learn that the duck hunter standing down the line was not really a hunter with a gun, but a game warden with a summons book in his hand.

Spent all day checking duck hunters. They certainly pay their own way with a hunting license, a Federal duck stamp, and a state duck stamp. Each state also gets a part of the Federal tax back from the sale of guns and ammunition to use on waterfowl areas.

After the shooting hours were over for the day and the last hunter had left the marsh the sounds of the marsh could once again be heard. It's been a long day, but I enjoyed nearly every minute of it. ☆

RABBIT . . .

(Continued from Page 9)

RABBIT AND NOODLES

Cook 1 rabbit in salted water with 1 chopped onion until meat falls from bones. Then dice meat and place in buttered casserole with Noodle Squares (below), covering bottom of casserole with squares first, then adding a layer of meat. Continue process, alternating the layers of noodles and meat until both are used up. Pour the broth in which the rabbit was cooked over the top and bake in 375°F. oven 30 minutes. Serves 3 to 4.

Noodle Squares

2 eggs, lightly beaten
 ¼ teaspoon baking powder
 1 teaspoon salt
 ½ cup mlk
 flour

To lightly beaten eggs, add baking powder, salt, and milk. Then add enough flour to form a stiff dough. Roll out on floured board to ⅛-inch thickness. Cut into 1½-inch squares.

BRAISED RABBIT

Cut meat in serving pieces and soak overnight in water to which a bit of baking soda has been added. Remove, drain and wipe dry. Shake pieces of meat in paper bag containing flour, salt and pepper. Brown rabbit well in bacon fat or other shortening. Place in a roaster, sprinkle with 2 carrots, chopped; add 1 cup water and bake in 300° F. oven until tender.

ITALIAN RABBIT

1 rabbit, cleaned and cut in serving pieces
 red wine
 4 tablespoons butter
 2 medium onions, sliced
 3 tablespoons flour
 1½ cups water
 1 can mushrooms
 1 teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon pepper
 1 bay leaf
 ½ teaspoon parsley flakes
 ¼ teaspoon oregano
 ¼ teaspoon thyme

Soak meat overnight in wine to cover. Melt butter in deep skillet, add onions, and saute un-

til tender. Blend in flour and add 1 cup wine in which rabbit was marinated. Put in water, mushrooms, remaining wine, salt, pepper, bay leaf, parsley flakes, oregano, and thyme. Bring mixture to boil and add meat. Cover and simmer 1½ hours. Serves 4.

ROAST RABBIT WITH POTATO STUFFING

1 rabbit
 2 cups mashed potatoes
 2 tablespoons butter, melted
 1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon pepper
 ½ teaspoon poultry seasoning
 1 cup minced celery

Mix all together and use to stuff rabbit. Skewer and place in baking pan with legs folded under body. Lay strips of bacon over back of rabbit. Roast in 400°F. oven for 10 minutes, pour 1½ cups hot water over rabbit and bake until done, about 1 hour. Shortly before rabbit is done, remove bacon to allow browning. Serves 2. ☆

**Yellow River Marker Honors Manford Ellerhoff**

A monument to the late Manford A. Ellerhoff was recently dedicated by his wife, Virginia, and son, Tom, in a short ceremony at the Yellow River State Forest in Allamakee county. Gene Hertel, (right) state forester, was master of ceremonies for the program.

The monument to Ellerhoff, who died in 1971, recognizes his

contribution to the development of the state forest during his time spent as district forester with the Iowa Conservation Commission.

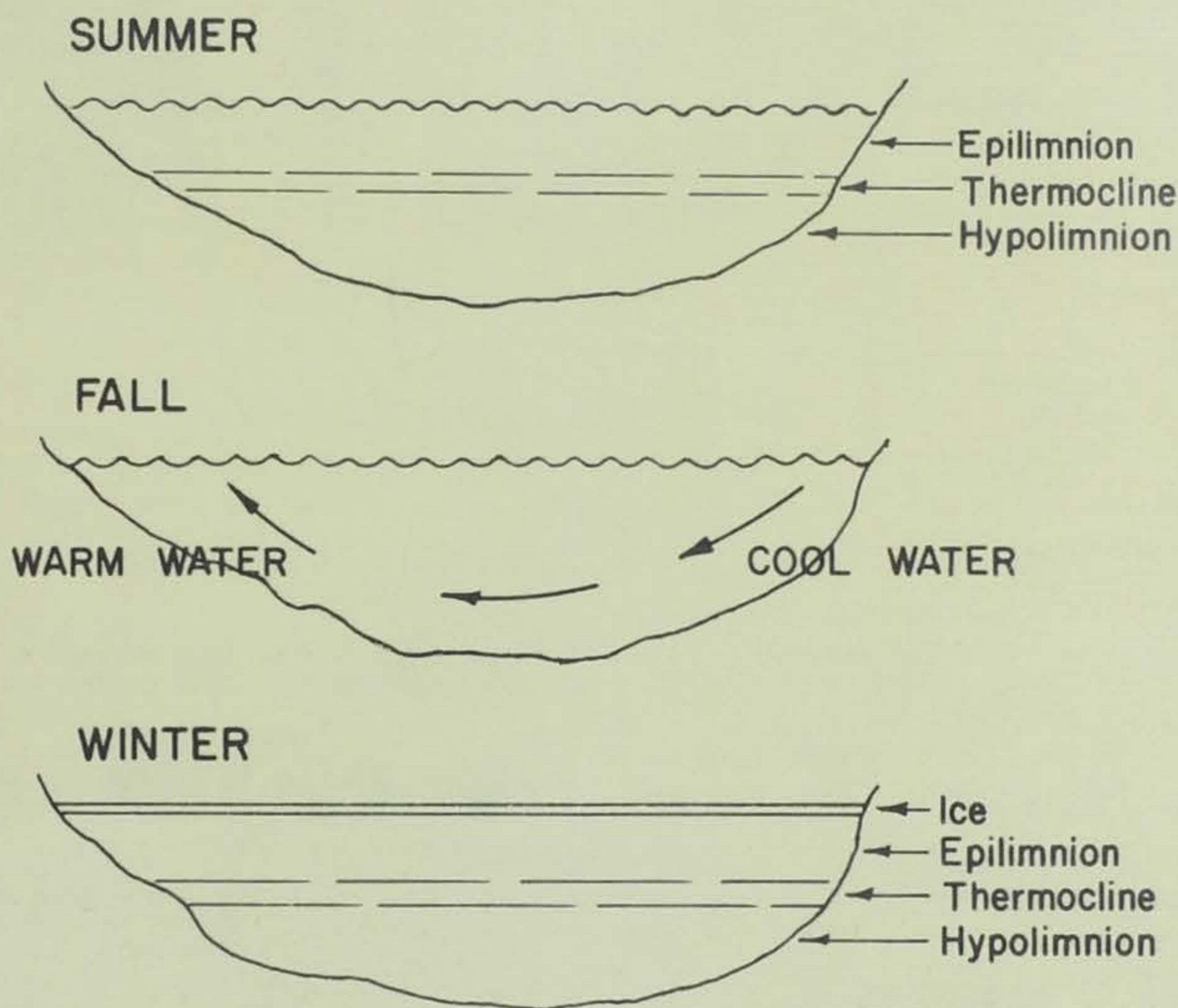
Fred Priewert, commission director, and a number of others involved in carrying out Ellerhoff's plans in the area were present. ☆

Classroom Corner

By Curt Powell

Administration

Conservation Education Center



Water is an amazing substance. We use it for cleaning, cooking, drinking, recreation and many other things. An abundance of life exists in water. There are many things we understand about water and many things we don't understand.

Examine a pint jar of water. Is there anything unusual about it? You'll notice that it is tasteless, odorless, and colorless. Place the jar in the freezer. Where does the ice begin to form? Why at the top? Most other liquids are heaviest (more dense) at their freezing point and sink as they freeze. Water, however, is densest a few degrees above freezing (4°C). This dense water sinks and the lighter, freezing water rises. This explains how life can continue under the ice in the winter.

Have you ever heard people talk about a lake "turning over"?

How does this occur? Oxygen is dissolved in the water. Water temperature and dissolved oxygen are fairly uniform. Wind and water currents mix the water (hence temperature and D. O. are mixed). In deeper water this mixing process is called an "overturn".

As summer comes, the sun warms the upper layer of water. This warm water (less dense) "floats" on the surface above the more dense cold water. There then exists a stratification of water of various temperatures and dissolved oxygen content in the lake. These layers are called (see diagram) "Epilimnion" (an upper warmer area, the "Metalimnion", or thermocline (transition layer) and the hypolimnion (colder and has less D. O.).

When fall approaches, the water at the surface becomes colder and slowly sinks. This is replaced

by warmer, lighter water rising from below. D. O. and temperatures are again well circulated. This continues until the colder water reaches 4°C . Water cooler than this freezes and remains at the surface as ice. Again three layers of dissolved oxygen develop as the ice and cooler epilimnion inhibit circulation. Perhaps diagram 2 will help illustrate this. This is what is meant by a "turnover".

At what depth might you fish in the summer to have the best luck? How would you determine at what depth to fish? Would you find an over-abundance of aquatic life in the lower layer? Why?

*SOURCE: Andrews, William A., *A Guide to the Study of Fresh Water Ecology*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1972. ☆

